



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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SACATON WOMAN PLEADS GUILTY TO DIVERTING TRIBAL COLLEGE FUNDS

PHOENIX Ariz. -- Jacqueline Boni, 55, of Sacaton, Ariz., pleaded guilty on August 16, 2006, to Theft of Indian Tribal Organization Funds in federal district court in Phoenix.

Paul Charlton, United States Attorney for the District of Arizona remarked, "Handling Indian Education Funds is a trust which requires the highest degree to ethical conduct among those who administer those funds. Violations of that trust must be dealt with a meaningful sanction as a deterrent to prevent others from engaging in similar wrongful conduct."

Boni, the former Director of the Student Service Office for the Gila River Indian Community (GRIC) Department of Education, was responsible for administering the tribe's education scholarship program funded from casino revenues. She supervised students receiving GRIC scholarships for the University of Phoenix.

In her guilty plea, Boni admitted that she diverted tuition refunds due GRIC to former students and herself. The students were not enrolled in school and were not eligible for the scholarship refunds. The government has alleged that Boni misapplied in excess of \$142,000.00 of tribal funds through the improper refunds.

A conviction for Theft From an Indian Tribal Organization carries a maximum penalty of five years imprisonment, a \$250,000.00 fine or both. In determining an actual sentence, United States District Court Judge Mary H. Murguia will consult the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges. The judge, however, is not bound by those guidelines in determining a sentence.

The FBI conducted the investigation and Richard I. Mesh, Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona, Phoenix, handled the prosecution.

CASE NUMBER: CR-05-176-PHX-MHM
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